



Arizona State Veteran Home Memorial Day

Monday, May 31, 2010

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Good afternoon.

It is always such an honor for me to come here and be surrounded by American heroes. It is a special honor to be here on memorial Day.

Today, each of us should take time to remember that very minute of every hour of every day we live in a free nation.

It is a freedom protected by the service of men and women in uniform standing lonely watches in foreign lands, isolated posts, always standing fast against the forces of fear and tyranny.

Whenever America has faced the impending darkness of war, young patriots have stepped forward to say, "I will go ... I will serve ... I will fight for what's right."

Today, at this special place, home to some of Arizona's own heroes, I want to take a moment to remember several residents who have reported to their "last post."

Ralph Hayman passed away on April 15th, 2010
here at the Arizona State Veteran Home.

On December 8, 1941, Ralph was an Army staff sergeant serving in the Philippines.

On that day, a relentless Japanese surprise attack forced Ralph's unit to retreat to the island of Cooregidor where they held out until May 1942, when they were taken prisoner of war by Japanese troops.

Ralph and the other captured American troops were then forced to march to their camp about 80 miles to the north in what became known to history as the "Bataan Death March."

Ten-thousand of his fellow Americans did not survive that march.

Moved many times as a P-O-W, Ralph was beaten, starved, and forced to witness too many of his fellow soldiers die of disease and maltreatment.

For the remainder of the war, Ralph and the other survivors were forced to perform hard labor.

Ralph returned from the war a different man. He was quiet and never cared to speak of his experiences. He became a Welder and Pipe Fitter, and was a member in the Plumbers and Pipe fitters Union Local 469 for 60 years.

Ralph was married to Mary Hayman for 52 years and was a devoted step-father to Mary's 3 children.

Mary, who just turned 100 years of age on Saturday, is also a resident here at the Arizona State Veteran Home.

Resident George Winget enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1935, serving as a machinist mate second class and as a member of the motor torpedo boat squadron in the Philippines as the war broke out.

George was awarded the Silver Star, the third highest decoration for heroism in the face of the enemy, for taking General Douglas MacArthur, his family and his staff from Corregidor Island to a rendezvous with an Army plane which delivered them safely to Australia.

George returned to the Philippines to form and lead a guerrilla unit of Filipinos and American soldiers who attacked the occupying Japanese when and where they could.

Forty years after the war, George Winget and other members of the American Guerrillas of Mindanao received a Gold Cross from the Philippine government recognizing their outstanding service as guerrillas.

George became a postal carrier after the war and was a resident of the Arizona State Veteran Home for more than 5 years when he passed away on April 22, 2010.

Frank Seggerty was drafted into the Army Air Corps at the age of 18 and served as a tail gunner on board a B-17 in the Eighth Air Force stationed in England.

On his 18th mission, Frank's aircraft was involved in a low level raid on a Nazi submarine factory. While they successfully took out the target, their plane was hit by enemy flak and forced down a few miles away.

Frank and two of his crewmates were the only survivors. Suffering from numerous broken bones, the three were taken to a nearby castle where they were held captive in the dungeon with no food.

One day, the Germans did not show up, and Frank and the others thought they heard people outside speaking English.

Liberated by Allied troops, Frank weighed only 90 pounds.

After the war, Frank married, had a child and became a successful salesman traveling around the U.S.

He retired here in Arizona and spent the last two years of his life as a resident of the Arizona State Veteran Home.

And so, on this day, when we Americans remember those who gave their lives so that we can live in freedom, I ask that you take time to introduce yourselves to some of our living heroes ... the residents here at the Arizona State Veteran Home.

Our commitment should be to tell their stories so that we will always remember their uncommon courage and glorious valor.

I am reminded of a Bible verse that says, "These were men of mercy, whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten ... and their name lives to all generations."

Thank you.